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CHRISTIANS OPPOSE NATIONAL FOUNDING DAY

"Kenkoku Kinen no Hi", or "National Founding Day," is a national holiday celebrated February 11 each year. According to Japanese myth, this is the day of the ascension of the first emperor, Jimmu, in 660 B.C. It was first designated National Founding Day in 1872, and Emperor Meiji promulgated the Imperial Constitution on this day in 1889. In 1966, a bill to establish this day as a national holiday was passed, and since 1967 the celebrations surrounding it have served as a rallying point for both proponents and opponents of the restoration of State Shinto and sovereignty of the emperor.

Christians have renamed National Founding Day, "Freedom of Faith Day," as a protest against the "Tenno" system and the institution of this day as a national holiday. It is a day when Christians nationwide hold various meetings and demonstrations calling for opposition to "Daijosai" and "Tenno's" enthronement ceremonies.

NCC/J's Anti-"Daijosai" Signature Collection Center sponsored a meeting at Chiyoda Public Hall in Tokyo and about four-hundred people attended.

The group stressed that Japan's colonization policy was forcefully carried out under the "Tenno" who holds power over the military and all religious bodies. The ruling structures suppressed human rights, religion and thought. Once again this system has regained its power.

The moderator appealed to the audience saying, we must continuously say "NO" to all actions which place the "Tenno" in a mystical position as a "living-god." The government is planning to spend more than 10 billion yen (\$69,444,444.44) for "Tenno's" enthronement ceremonies. The intention is to enforce the tenno system, which excludes non-nationals.

Ms. Tomoko Yamazaki, main speaker at the meeting, talked about her own experiences in the post war period. Her father was in the Japanese Imperial Navy on a new submarine which sank. The government covered up this incident, and the fate of the crew was not made known. After the war was over these persons who had died on the submarine came to be discovered, for they had been enshrined in "Yasukuni" Shrine without the consent of their families. She said, "The Japanese did not make decisions through dialogue but through direct and indirect pressure upon the people; who were subjugated and controlled by the authorities. These trends have not changed. People show some hesitance whenever they talk about the "Tenno", and the most fearful thing is that there is no freedom as far as the subject of the "Tenno" is concerned. It is peculiar that people feel restrictions on freedom of speech considering that it is guaranteed under the present constitution."

Before the participants took to the streets in the pouring rain for a demonstration, they adopted an appeal opposing the government's support of the "Tenno's" enthronement. It reads, "We reject the political unification under the domain of the "Tenno" and his control over the people of Japan. We struggle for the realization of a society which sustains the freedom and human rights of all peoples and encourages the different value systems of individuals."

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Graduate Theological Union

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Evangelical Church of North Vietnam

by Rev. Suguru Matsuki

My five day visit to North Vietnam began with unexpected cold weather in Hanoi. I had a chance to visit one of the seventeen Evangelical churches of North Vietnam. Its Sunday service was from 8:00 to 10:00 AM and it included communion.

Among those in the congregation was a group of young theological students sitting in the front row listening intently to the sermon by Rev. Bui Hoanh Thu, which focused on empowering people to continue the faith struggle.

Seventy-seven year old Rev. Thu is the Vice-Chairperson, the General Secretary, and the Principle of the Evangelical Church, the only protestant church in North Vietnam.

The Evangelical Church was started in 1911 by the Christian Missionary Alliance of the United States which built churches in Vietnam. At present there are twenty churches in North Vietnam and ten-thousand church members with five pastors. It was reported that there were forty baptisms in 1988.

All five pastors are over seventy years old: the moderator is eighty-three years old and is hospitalized. These pastors received their theological education in the 1930's. In 1954 Vietnam was divided into north and south and education for the pastorate was not recognized by the government in the north. Thus the number of pastors from the north gradually decreased.

In 1987 the Bible School was recognized by the government after a seven year waiting period. In December 1988, the school began with fifteen students who were officially recognized by the government. In addition to the fifteen students are three women who are studying without the government's official recognition and seventeen women who are auditing the classes. All of these students are under

the tutelage of just four professors. The term of education is four years, with one year of field work. New students must wait until the current students graduate in 1993, before they can begin studying

The Rev. Thu explained that even in the midst of air-raids during the Vietnam War Christians continued to hold their worship services.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCHES

With permission of the government, Bible Schools and church buildings are being constructed in Hanoi, as Christians set off on a new course of development. Since 1987, with financial assistance from overseas churches, there has been continued church construction.

From 1976 theological schools were closed in the south. Two of the four theological professors in the newly built school in the north were originally invited to the north from the south. However, state regulations prohibit them from preaching in the Hanoi churches.

I was asked to pay a fine since I met with church leaders without state permission. Although the state says that freedom of faith is guaranteed by law, it is difficult for us to understand fully the meaning of freedom in this context.

I was told that a pastor's salary is about thirty-five dollars a month; and the cost of a student's room and board is twenty dollars. Scholarships for these thirty-five students depends entirely on donations from abroad. Let us remember them in our prayers and support these students in this difficult situation as they participate in God's work.



North Vietnam Church Members

APARTHEID CANNOT BE 'REFORMED'

IDAF Chairperson Huddleston Visits Japan

English Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, chairman of the International Defense and Aid Fund (IDAF), an organization created to ensure that those fighting apartheid be supported, visited Japan at the end of January at the invitation of the regional African National Congress (ANC) office. During his stay, Archbishop Huddleston participated in a three-day international seminar on Apartheid sponsored by the United Nations University in Tokyo, met with anti-apartheid groups and government officials, and spoke of the work of the IDAF and the present situation in South Africa and Namibia. Part of Huddleston's purpose in coming to Japan was to learn about the anti-apartheid movement here and to persuade the Japanese government to give money to the IDAF.

According to information provided by IDAF, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston's name has become synonymous with the battle against racial tyranny in Southern Africa. Much of his inspiration derives from his experiences while living and working in Johannesburg's black townships between 1943 and 1956. Relentless in opposing apartheid he came to champion the oppressed. They called him "Makhalipile" after a bold warrior who was adopted by another people when their leaders were lost or captured."

Archbishop Huddleston met with members of the NCC/J and its anti-apartheid committee on January 26, 1990 at the Waseda Hoshien in Tokyo.

"I get tired of saying it," Huddleston said to the group, "I must have said it a million times. Many people think that apartheid is just racial prejudice and discrimination, (which is a problem in every country), but Apartheid is unique because its enforced by law. The minority is ruling the majority." He went on to explain that the difference between discrimination against blacks in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa is that

Blacks are a majority in South Africa and their rights are denied by the constitution.

They have no vote and no parliament. Eighty seven percent of the land in South Africa is owned by the whites. Four fifths of the population is restricted to thirteen percent of the land area.

Japan is a major trading partner with South Africa, thereby supporting the "evil system" of Apartheid. At a special session of the United Nations last year member countries were urged to put more pressure on South Africa through economic sanctions.

Huddleston explained that "the pressure now on the apartheid regime is so tremendous its irreversible." In emphasizing the necessity to abolish apartheid he added, "You can't reform apartheid - it cannot be reformed. Just as slavery could not be reformed." This is the message he conveys while trying to mobilize international opinion and the message he sends to his own British government, the country which created apartheid in South Africa.

The IDAF was created to fulfill three purposes:

- 1) To ensure that all political prisoners in South Africa have the opportunity for legal defense.
- 2) To provide aid, i.e., food and education, in support of the families of those charged and imprisoned.
- 3) To keep the conscience of the world alive by a presentation of the facts. Information gathered by IDAF's research branch is used by the United Nations.

The IDAF is banned in South Africa and those receiving monetary support of said organization risk arrest. The IDAF is supported by money from sympathetic governments and is currently aiding and defending twenty thousand people. Although there have been some recent improvements, the task is still very large, as thousands more are in need every year.

When white rule ceases to exist in South Africa the IDAF will be dissolved, their purpose having been achieved.

The State of Education

by Toyoko Okido

The Third Annual Joint Seminar for Feminist Theology for Koreans, Japanese and Koreans in Japan, was held in Kwangju, Korea, February 10-12, 1990. The following is an excerpt from a speech made by one of the Japanese participants, Toyoko Okido.

"I'm a thirty-six year old elementary school teacher in Orio, Yahata Nishi-Ku, in Kita Kyushu City, Japan. I am not married.

The town of Orio used to be a transit area for Koreans who were forcibly brought to Japan from Korea by the Japanese Imperial Government, to work in the coal mines.

Nearby our home are locations which were used as a kind of concentration camp for the forced laborers from Korea. Of course, there are second and third generation Koreans in Japan attending my school. They cannot use their own Korean names but use Japanese names. Behind my school is a Korean Christian Church where I plan to be baptized next May. I'm a member of the Japanese teachers union and am active in its women's section. I have learned briefly about the women's liberation movement but have no idea about Christian theology. Yet I wonder whether the world of Christianity isn't also a male-centered world?

It has been forty five years since Korea was liberated. But in Japan, the pain of war has faded and teachers who attempt to teach the real history are punished. And, there are voices and attempts to justify the aggression of Emperor Hirohito's army. Just prior to Hirohito's birthday five years ago I published a school newsletter for the children in my class and their parents. In the newsletter I tried to raise the issue of the emperor system and

how much discrimination the "Buraku" people have faced as those who have been at the bottom of the class system (the Emperor being at the top), and how they have been made to sacrifice! What crimes were committed by the Imperial soldiers? And, I asked questions about the luxurious life of the emperor in the Imperial Palace, as maintained by our taxes. As a result, I was suspended for two months and prohibited from going to work. I didn't receive a salary or bonus. However, I didn't waste this time. I visited Korea and attended several meetings and demonstrations. After two months I was restored to the school and continue to work as an educator, but I have never forgotten this regrettable experience.

But now look at the state of education! The contents of the study guide manual has worsened. This manual was made upon the request of politicians Nakasone, Ezoe, and Takaishi, all of whom were indicted in the Recruit Stock (influence peddling) Scandal. For children in the first and second grade, social studies and science have been eliminated as subjects of study; instead, they will be taught about animism, in order that they will become conscious of powers beyond human beings. According to the study plan, information about the "emperor" will be taught in the fourth grade. The history of only forty-two persons (former emperors) will be taught, thus making it seem as if these forty-two were solely responsible for the history of Japan, with no emphasis on the contributions made by the grassroots people. Certainly this is an effort to strengthen the state's imperial historical perspective."



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US MILITARISM IN OKINAWA

Update on Iejima Struggle

by Carolyn Francis
Okinawa Christian Center

April 7, 1989:

While cutting weeds on his land, a farmer stepped on an unexploded World War II bomb. The injury required a long hospitalization, and at last report, the farmer was still unable to work.

May 24, 1989:

The Naha Defense Facilities Administration Bureau announced a change in the site of the proposed Harrier fighter plane landing pad from Aha Village, on the northeast coast of Okinawa Island, to an unused auxiliary airstrip on Iejima.

The two-year opposition movement by Aha citizens was formed because of fear that the construction of the Harrier airstrip and the related drill practice would cause the destruction of mountains, foliage, and the rare "Yanbaru" birds. This, in addition to the availability of the Iejima airstrip, and the lack of an existing opposition movement on Iejima, were seen to be the reasons for the move.

Inducements dangled before Iejima citizens by the mayor, to get them to accept the airstrip, included: construction of dams to provide additional water supply for island farmers, and funding for other public facilities.

November 13, 1989:

Renovation of the airstrip to accommodate the Harrier was completed (during which period U.S. vehicles involved in construction were involved in traffic accidents damaging islanders property and crops) and demonstrations of the Harrier take-off and landing were conducted for islanders and media, prior to the beginning of drills.

December 8, 1989:

Live artillery drills on a U.S. occupied artillery practice range during the one-week Beachcrest Drills, resulted in a fire which burned ten hectares of land and spread to within one kilometer of islanders' sugar-cane fields and three kilometers of islanders' homes.

December 26, 1989:

The Defense Facilities Administration Bureau (Naha) announced that while Harrier vertical take-off and landing drills would take place on Iejima, other drills involving the Harrier would probably take place at Camp Hansen and Camp Schwab, both on the main island of Okinawa.

January 22, 1990:

The Naha Defense Administration Bureau announced that although Harrier drills had already been taking place over the ocean in the Iejima area, the take-off and landing drills using the Harrier pad on Iejima would begin. Due to poor weather conditions, drills did not actually begin until January 24 due to complaints and protests over the noise level of the planes during the November 13 demonstration with island town hall officials stationed throughout the area to test the noise emission levels.

January 26, 1990:

One of the Harrier planes from Iwakuni Air Base, after its third day of drills on Iejima, crashed into the sea about 100 kilometers north of the island. The fate of the pilot is unknown, and U.S. military officials have not yet disclosed the cause of the crash.

Iejima islanders and other concerned citizens and groups throughout Okinawa protested the Harrier drills and the danger their presence poses to human life and property.

January 29, 1990:

Both the Iejima island assembly and the Okinawa prefectural assembly call for a halt to Harrier drills until the cause of the accident is made clear. Military officials have issued no explanation, and drills have not resumed yet.

LIBERATION TO THE CAPTIVES

The NCC/J received the following FAX from Noel Villalba on February 13, 1990.

"The Protestant lawyers league in the Philippines has announced today (February 13, 1990) that Judge Salazar of regional trial court in Quezon City, the Philippines, acquitted me on charges of illegal possession of firearms. I am free. Deeply thanking you for your prayers and solidarity."

JCAN has been following Noel's ordeal since his abduction on June 27, 1988, while on his way to the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. He was taken to the Capital Regional Command - Regional Intelligence Operations Unit (CAPCOM-RIOU) Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig, in Metro Manila. He was tortured and made to confess crimes he did not commit. His wife and friends could not locate him until July 5, 1988.

Although Noel was released from detention in July and eventually permitted to return to work in Hong Kong, his case dragged on in the courts until the February 13 decision.

The National Christian Council in Japan sends hearty congratulations to Noel Villalba and his family and rejoices in his resurrected freedom!

NOTE:

Noel Villalba is a Filipino working in Hong Kong for DAGA (Documentation for Action Groups in Asia) a part of the Christian Conference of Asia's Urban Rural Mission. He visited Japan in May, 1989 as NCC/J's Asia Sunday guest.

SOH SUNG TO BE FREED

The media in Japan and South Korea have reported that Soh Sung, who has been serving a life sentence in Daejeon Prison in Korea, will be released on March 1,

1990 after eighteen years in prison.

Soh Sung, who was a Korean resident in Japan until he went to study at Seoul National University in Korea, was arrested in 1971, along with his younger brother Soh Joon Shik, on charges of anti-state activities. Soh Joon Shik, whose term was completed in 1978, was finally released from prison last year and continues to work in Seoul in the struggle to free long term political prisoners.

March 1 is significant as it marks the first major protest in Korean history against Japanese colonial rule - the March 1st Independence Movement.

Soh Sung, along with his fellow prisoners has been continuing his struggle in prison. Last fall he completed a march that three week hunger strike demanding the repeal of undemocratic laws and freedom for political prisoners (just one of many hunger strikes he has carried out since his imprisonment).

"I believe now, that our nation must be reunited peacefully and independently, no matter what the international situation may be, and no matter what changes must take place. This is a huge undertaking but all must believe in it. My pain, which I must bear in silence, is a part of my nation's pain and I can't be released from it before our nation is."

(*Words of Soh Sung from the book "Waiting For The Dawn," published by the Save the Soh Brothers Society, Japan.)

COURT RULES ON WAR MONUMENT

On February 20, Judge Matsushima of the Nagasaki District Court handed down a decision that Nagasaki Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima violated a constitutional ban on official involvement in religious activities when city funds were used to maintain a monument for the war dead. The Rev. Masaharu Oka, a Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church pastor, initiated the case against Motoshima's subsidies when he

manded the return to city coffers of the 10,000 yen (\$3,888.88) the mayor extended for the fourteen sets of monuments in fiscal 1981.

When presenting this issue to the city council, the Rev. Oka, who served three terms as a Nagasaki city council member, was attacked by the same ultra-nationalist who shot Motoshima on January 18, 1990, in reaction to the mayor's suggestion that the Showa "Tenno" was responsible for World War II.

The court ordered Motoshima to issue repayment of forty thousand yen for the monument which retains religious affiliation, but the other thirteen monuments are recognized as memorials to the war dead but with no religious affiliations.

Three points were debated by the court:

- 1) Are the monuments religious facilities?
- 2) Does the group responsible for maintenance of the monument have religious affiliations?
- 3) The question of the use of public money, which may violates Article Twenty of the Japanese Constitution (No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State.) and Article Eighty-Nine of the same document (No public money or other property shall be expended or appropriated for the use of any religious institution.).

The judge said that the monument at Sakoumegasaki was erected specifically as a local affiliate of Yasukuni Shrine before the war, and memorial ceremonies have been held under the auspices of Shinto priests of "Gokoku" (Defend the Country) Shrine. Thus the judge said that due to the violation of article twenty of the constitution, which ensures separation of state and religion, Motoshima is to be ordered to make repayment for money spent on this monument. However the judge did not find any of the other thirteen monuments to have religious affiliations, as they were only intended to be memorials to the war dead.

Rev. Oka said, "The ruling meant a 99.9% defeat for me, because the court rejected most of my arguments on the separation of state and religion. Mr. Motoshima commented that he wants to continue to maintain city funding for the war dead monuments and to attend the ceremonial services.

ELECTION RESULTS

In the Lower House elections on February 18, 1990, the Liberal Democratic Party retained its power by securing a majority of 275 seats, while the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) took 136 seats, Komeito (Clean Government Party) 45, Japan Communist Party 16, Democratic Socialist Party 14, Shaminren (Social Democratic Federation) 4, and independent 22.

Among the 512 seats in the Lower House there are 12 women (there were 7 women in the previous Lower House): JSP 7, Komeito 1, JCP 2, and Independents 2. Ms. Takako Doi, chairperson of the JSP, brought in fresh air to the exclusive political circles thereby generating interest in politics on the part of women and ordinary citizens.

The LDP once again was not able to choose a woman as an electoral candidate. Ms. Hiromi Okazaki, newly elected independent candidate from Hyogo district at age 38, is the youngest among the 12 women members.

The LDP used its power, influence and wealth in cooperation with various economic and financial circles to ensure success, while the opposition parties were unable to create a viable coalition plan to compete against the ruling party as a result of the inability of the JSP to provide strong leadership among the opposition parties.

For the first time a pastor, Rev. Ryuichi Dohi (Kyodan) was elected from Hyogo district; and, in addition, seven other Christians were elected to the Lower House.

FEBRUARY DAIRY

*Korea-Japan 3rd Annual Joint Seminar on Feminist Theology was held in Kwangju, Korea on Feb. 10-12. Five Korean residents in Japan and thirteen Japanese women participated. The following, "Appeal to the Japanese Government" was made:

"According to the report from Korean residents in Japan it is clear that they are, after forty-five years, full members of Japanese society. Although they pay taxes their human rights are not guaranteed. We demand that Koreans in Japan be able to live with human dignity and appeal to the Japanese government to make the following changes:

- 1) Permanent Residency Status for fourth generation Koreans in Japan should be guaranteed.
- 2) The law requiring sixteen year old foreign residents to be fingerprinted must be abolished.
- 3) The law stating that all public workers must be Japanese nationals must be abolished.
- 4) Korean residents in Japan should be given the right to vote.

*The ninth joint meeting of the NCC/J Faith and Order Committee and the Ecumenism Commission of the Japan Catholic Church was held on February 9, 1990 at the Catholic Church Central office in Tokyo. The joint meetings began in 1980 and have continued yearly.

*On February 11, 1990 the NCC/J Women's Committee, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Japan YWCA, sent an appeal to Prime Minister Kaifu and the Imperial Household Agency concerning the "Tenno's" enthronement ceremonies ("Sokui no Rei") and "Daijosai."

The letter stated that "Sokui no Rei" should not be carried out in a democratic country and that public funds should not be used to support the "Daijosai" ceremony.

*The NCC/J's Yasukuni Shrine Special Issues Committee sent a letter to all the foreign embassies in Japan criticizing the governments judgement in holding the "Tenno's" enthronement ceremonies and the use of public funds for the "Daijosai" ceremony.

*The Christian Conference of Asia Education Department sponsored a conference in the Philippines (February 5 - 9, 1990) on Ecumenical Education: "Mission in a Changing Asia." Ms. Ruth Shoji and Prof. Kurata Masahiko participated from Japan.

UPCOMING EVENTS

*On March 9, 1990 a gathering to celebrate the release of Nelson Mandela will be held at the Tokyo Baptist Peace Church from 6:30 - 9:00 PM. Speakers include: Jerry Matsila, regional ANC representative, who will speak on the "Struggle with Nelson Mandela in South Africa;" Jintaro Ueda, General Secretary of the Japan Anglican Church and Chairperson of NCC/J's Anti-apartheid committee, to speak on the "Struggle of the Churches Against Apartheid;" and, Yoko Hayashi, a lawyer, and Akira Kusuvara, of the Japan Anti-apartheid committee, will address the "Task of Japan in the Fight Against Apartheid."

*A Study tour to the Philippines sponsored by NCC/J's Japan Committee for Philippine Concerns and the Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues, will leave on March 26, 1990 for one week. The group will visit Manila and Mindanao and will focus on the relationships between Japan and the Philippines.

*The World Council of Churches conference on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) will be held in Seoul, Korea on March 5-12, 1990. One thousand people are expected to gather in Seoul to participate in this important meeting.

To ensure that women have a forum to share their experiences and voice their concerns, a separate women's meeting will be held from March 3-5, 1990. Seven delegates from Japan will attend.